

OCT 26 1998

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October 19, 1998

Mr. Lester Snow
Executive Director
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Inclusion of Trinity River Watershed within CALFED Watershed Program

Dear Lester:

I am writing to you on behalf of the BDAC Watershed work group regarding the Trinity River Watershed. At our last meeting of September 2, 1998, the work group reached an agreement on the point that the Trinity River Watershed should be included within the scope of the CALFED watershed effort. Furthermore, the work group asked that I submit a letter to you and the CALFED Policy Group addressing this matter. Therefore, I have attempted to provide you with relevant information regarding this issue and my thoughts on why the recommendation is both scientifically, as well as legislatively valid.

1. With the passage of SB900 (Proposition 204), the California Legislature recognized the Trinity River Watershed as being a part of the watershed system upon which the Bay-Delta is dependent. Although not naturally connected to the Bay-Delta it is clear that significant Trinity Watershed health problems will affect diversions into the Sacramento River and ultimately the Delta. This relationship is clearly recognized in the following areas of "The Safe, Clean, Reliable Water Supply Act" of 1996, Subsection 78501(f) "Delta means the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta", Article 5 "Delta Tributary Watershed Program" and Subsection 78647.4(b), - "For the Purposes of this Article, 'Delta Tributary Watershed' means a watershed which drains into the delta or the Trinity River."
2. The Trinity River has contributed an average of one million acre-feet of water per year to the Bay-Delta Ecosystem for 34 years, all during dry seasons.
3. The Trinity Watershed has continued to decline in overall ecological health due in part, to diversions to the Sacramento. The problems of the Trinity Watershed may be able to be resolved by both hydraulic (water) actions as well as non-hydraulic actions. To the extent non-hydraulic actions are feasible, and achieve the desired goals of Trinity Watershed improvement, those actions may benefit the Bay-Delta Ecosystem by allowing continued diversions into the Sacramento.

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4. If in-basin Trinity River flows are implemented as now proposed, the Trinity will still be an important source of fresh water for the Bay-Delta. Currently, required releases to the Trinity from the Central Valley Project storage are 340,000 acre-feet per year. Under the flow study recommendation, which is also the preferred alternative in the EIS/EIR now in preparation, the weighted average of prescribed releases in the various water-year-types is 592,000+ acre-feet per year. The average production of water in the Trinity Watershed at the CVP Dams is 1.2 million-acre feet, an annual average of 608,000-acre feet will continue to be available for transfer to the Sacramento.
5. The most significant problems on the Trinity include the accumulation of tremendous amounts of sediment in the river which cannot be transported by the diminished flows, in addition, there have been associated changes in channel morphology and reductions in habitat for fish at various life stages resulting in an 80 to 90% reduction in fish populations from pre-dam levels.
6. The Secretary of Interior is legally required to restore the fisheries of the Trinity River, by federal trust obligations to preserve the federally reserved fishing rights of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and the Yurok Tribe, Area of Origin Law, by the Public Trust Doctrine and by explicit Congressional direction; 1995 Trinity River Act, P.L. 86-386, the 1984 Trinity Basin Fish and Wildlife Management Act P.L. 98-541 and by the 1992 Central Valley Project Improvement Act P.L. 102-575.
7. It is clear from the existing record that the Trinity Watershed cannot be restored without water. However, a variety of activities can be undertaken which could minimize the total amount of water necessary for restoration instream and thus increase the amount available for export. Obviously, if the tributary watersheds produce less sediment, less water is needed in the river to flush sediment. In addition, improvements in the Trinity River floodplain's ability to accommodate higher instantaneous (sediment flushing) flows would result in actual reductions in the total amount of water needed to move sediments. Studies indicate that floodplain improvements when implemented, could result in approximately 150,000 acre feet of water per year in the Sacramento which otherwise would be needed for sediment flushing in the Trinity.
8. Other mechanical channel manipulations would could be implemented within the Trinity and its tributaries include; sediment removal, physical improvement of fish habitat (fish passage barrier removal on tributaries), improvements in channel structure, erosion control measures, vegetation management and meadow restoration, to name a few.
9. In addition, watershed inventories should be carried out to examine other watershed restoration activities, which could be developed in a manner consistent with both Trinity River Watershed and CALFED goals.

LESTER SNOW

It is our recommendation that the Trinity Watershed be included within the CALFED program in order to allow for coordination of efforts between actions within the natural Bay-Delta watershed and those areas which are now through man's actions a part of that watershed. Just as water conservation, activities in Los Angeles can help or hinder CALFED efforts so too can Trinity River actions. I strongly support the work group's recommendation that the Trinity be included within your planning "envelope" for the purposes of watershed programs, technical support and funding along with the remainder of the functional Bay-Delta watershed.

I would be glad to discuss this further with you at your convenience. Please advise me of your decision on this matter at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert A. Meacher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" being more prominent.

Robert A. Meacher
Plumas County Supervisor

RAM:nd

LESTER SNOW